

great number of people in smaller towns where air-stops were not feasible, but also it seemed to me that the drama of the traditional campaign train would add zest and color to our efforts during this critical period when the nation's attention would be riveted on what we were doing.

There was one knotty problem that I discussed with Lodge privately. We had been receiving a good bit of flak over a statement he had made, October 12, during a talk in New York's Harlem. This is what he said:

"... there should be a Negro in the cabinet . . . It is part of our program and it is offered as a pledge." (The following week, in Albany, he added that he had meant this only as a "personal prediction" and he amended it to read "qualified Negro" but typically, this clarification made few headlines.)

When I was questioned about this, I of course replied that no pledges had been made for Cabinet appointments and that I would select my Cabinet solely on the basis of personal qualification—without regard to race or creed or color. The background for Lodge's statement puts it in perspective.

When he resigned as Ambassador to the UN, at the beginning of the campaign, Lodge felt that one of the best qualified men in the nation to replace him was Ralph Bunche, long-time member of the U.S.-UN delegation and of the Secretariat. Lodge knew that I shared his own high opinion of Bunche, who had lived and taught in my home state of California and whom I knew well. But there were so many current questions under debate at the time of Lodge's resignation that the decision had been to raise his experienced deputy, Jerry Wadsworth, to serve as Ambassador for the balance of the Eisenhower Administration. When Lodge had arrived in New York the previous week, he was urged by several of the New York Republican leaders to indicate in his Harlem speeches that a Nixon-Lodge Administration would follow a policy of appointing Negroes to any and all positions in government for which they were qualified. Lodge, consequently, made his statement about appointing a Negro to the Cabinet, having particularly in mind that our UN Ambassador sat in as a Cabinet member under Eisenhower and that Bunche might well be named by me to this position.

He could not have been more surprised when the story got the attention and the rather lurid play that it did. He immediately made it clear that he was expressing only a personal opinion and that the new

President, of course, would make all decisions with regard to his Cabinet. But the statement continued to plague us for the balance of the campaign. It hurt us in the South unquestionably. And it did us no good in the North. To Negroes as well as to other voters it appeared to be a crude attempt to woo the support of Negroes without regard to the qualifications an individual might have for high office—something that Lodge had never remotely intended to suggest. Such are the "unpredictables" of any campaign, especially in this day of almost instant mass communication.

Except for this one problem, the reports we received that Sunday were encouraging and we moved into the third week before Election Day with a confidence that the tide was running our way, an impression confirmed by former National Chairman Meade Alcorn as we campaigned through "Kennedy country" in southern New England on Monday, October 17.

At the American Legion Convention on Tuesday in Miami, I fired the opening gun of what was to turn out to be the major subject for discussion in the fourth and final debate, scheduled for Friday, October 21, in New York. Kennedy had been hammering away for weeks at the Administration's Cuba policy—although none too consistently. Early in the year—in a book of his speeches published in January—he was still describing Fidel Castro as "part of the legacy of Bolivar" and as simply a "fiery young rebel." In May, he said in a TV interview that "for the present, I support the Administration" even though "the situation in Cuba . . . continues to deteriorate." But by mid-September, with his campaign in full-swing, he was taking a very different line: the existence of Communism "eight jet minutes from the coast of Florida" was the fault of the Administration, he said on the fifteenth. On a September 30 TV show, he charged Castro up to us generally ("what they did wrong was not to use . . . our great influence . . . on Batista to have him relax his dictatorship and permit free elections"). Kennedy had much to criticize but little of substance to offer in the way of new policies and proposals.

This issue is an excellent illustration of the disadvantage that confronts a candidate who also represents an incumbent Administration. I had long been urging a stronger policy, within Administration councils, against Castro. I had had a three-hour conference with Castro when he visited Washington, back in April 1959. After that conference, I wrote a confidential memorandum for distribution to the CIA,

State Department, and White House. In it I stated flatly that I was convinced Castro was "either incredibly naïve about Communism or under Communist discipline" and that we would have to treat him and deal with him accordingly—under no further illusions about "fiery rebels" in the "tradition of Bolivar." My position was a minority one within the Administration and particularly so within the Latin American branch of the State Department. Trying to "get along with" and "understand" Castro continued to be the State Department line despite my own strong recommendation to the contrary—one, incidentally, which was shared by J. Edgar Hoover and by two of our former Ambassadors to Cuba, Arthur Gardner and Earl E. T. Smith, as well as by William Pawley who had held several diplomatic posts in Democratic Administrations and was a widely acknowledged expert on Latin American affairs.

Early in 1960, the position I had been advocating for nine months finally prevailed, and the CIA was given instructions to provide arms, ammunition, and training for Cubans who had fled the Castro regime and were now in exile in the United States and various Latin American countries. This program had been in operation for six months before the 1960 campaign got under way. It was a program, however, that I could say not one word about. The operation was covert. Under no circumstances could it be disclosed or even alluded to. Consequently, under Kennedy's attacks and his new demands for "militant" policies, I was in the position of a fighter with one hand tied behind his back. I knew we had a program under way to deal with Castro, but I could not even hint at its existence, much less spell it out.

Kennedy had spoken up to now only in vague generalities, and so I decided that here was the time and place—the Legion Convention in Miami—to counterattack. I felt that in addition to our secret operations, we could also substantially strengthen our overt and official policy for dealing with Castro. I urged several courses of action in my talks with State Department officials and finally found an ally in Douglas Dillon, the Under Secretary. In a nutshell, what I advocated and what I announced in my Miami speech was a policy of all-out "quarantine"—economically, politically, and diplomatically—of the Castro regime. I said that the time for patience was over, that we must move vigorously—if possible, in full association with our sister American republics—to eradicate this "cancer" in our own hemisphere and "to prevent further Soviet penetration." Our government was even then, I pointed out, planning "a number of steps" and "will very promptly take the strongest possible economic measures to counter the

economic banditry being practiced by this regime against our country and our citizens."

We flew back North late that night and on Wednesday evening, October 19, Kennedy and I were co-speakers at Cardinal Spellman's annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Dinner. Kennedy spoke first and read a speech which delighted this distinguished audience with its wit but also irritated them with an incredible display of bad judgment. At this strictly non-political, non-partisan affair, he proceeded to raise what were obviously partisan political overtones. When I then spoke extemporaneously, all I had to do to top his performance was to avoid any statement that smacked of partisanship. The effect was easily predictable. He had received polite applause. I received a prolonged ovation.

Kennedy himself referred ruefully to this incident when we met in Miami immediately after the election. He was discussing voting patterns among Catholics and he pointed out that economics rather than religion primarily determined how people voted. And then he added with a smile, "You saw how those wealthy Catholics reacted at the Al Smith Dinner in New York."

I had reserved Thursday for preparations for the fourth and final television debate. Foreign policy was to be the sole subject for discussion, and I knew that this was a major opportunity for me to move ahead—not only in the debate series but in the campaign itself. But Kennedy, recognizing that my Miami speech had taken most of the wind out of his sails on the Cuba issue, chose this day before the fourth debate for a major counterattack of his own. Huge black headlines in all the afternoon papers put it succinctly:

KENNEDY ADVOCATES U.S. INTERVENTION IN CUBA CALLS FOR AID TO REBEL FORCES IN CUBA

I could hardly believe my eyes. As early as September 23, Kennedy had given an exclusive statement to the Scripps-Howard papers in which he said, "The forces fighting for freedom in exile and in the mountains of Cuba should be sustained and assisted." But he had not followed up by advocating what was, in effect, direct intervention in Cuba in violation of our treaties with other Latin American countries—until now. Now, on October 20, he said:

We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro. Thus far, these fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our government.

As soon as I saw the story and read the statement I asked Fred Seaton to come to my hotel room. I knew that President Eisenhower had arranged for Kennedy to receive regular briefings by Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, on all covert operations around the world, as well as on the latest intelligence estimates—precisely so he would be as well aware as I of what our policies and programs were. I asked Seaton to call the White House at once on the security line and find out whether or not Dulles had briefed Kennedy on the fact that for months the CIA had not only been supporting and assisting but actually training Cuban exiles for the eventual purpose of supporting an invasion of Cuba itself.*

Seaton reported back to me in half an hour. His answer: Kennedy had been briefed on this operation.

For the first and only time in the campaign, I got mad at Kennedy—personally. I understand and expect hard-hitting attacks in a campaign. But in this instance I thought that Kennedy, with full knowledge of the facts, was jeopardizing the security of a United States foreign policy operation. And my rage was greater because I could do nothing about it.

I was faced with what was probably the most difficult decision of the campaign. Kennedy had me at a terrible disadvantage. He knew, as I did, that public sentiment in the United States was overwhelmingly in favor of a tougher line against Castro. I had long favored and fought for this line within the Administration, and the covert training of Cuban exiles as well as the new overt quarantine policy were programs due, in substantial part at least, to my efforts. Kennedy was now publicly advocating what was already the policy of the American Government—covertly—and Kennedy had been so informed. But by stating such a position publicly, he obviously stood to gain the support of all those who wanted a stronger policy against Castro but who, of course, did not know of our covert programs already under way.

What could I do? One course would be simply to state that what Kennedy was advocating as a new policy was already being done, had

* Senator Kennedy was briefed on Cuba by CIA representatives on July 23, 1960, at Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. Press accounts at the time characterized this briefing as a "nothing withheld rundown" on the "two hotspots, Cuba and the Congo." The *New York Times* on July 24, reported "... Such secret information as was added to the Senator's fund of knowledge about world affairs will remain secret. But it provides guidance for his campaign utterances dealing with foreign policy and defense and it puts him on the same footing as the administration's candidate, presumably Vice President Nixon."

However, after the publication of the first edition of this book, the White House issued a statement on March 20, 1962, denying that the two and one-fourth hours briefing covered any United States operation relating to Cuba.

been adopted as a policy as a result of my direct support, and that Kennedy was endangering the security of the whole operation by his public statement. But this would be, for me, an utterly irresponsible act: it would disclose a secret operation and completely destroy its effectiveness.

There was only one thing I could do. The covert operation had to be protected at all costs. I must not even suggest by implication that the United States was rendering aid to rebel forces in and out of Cuba. In fact, I must go to the other extreme: I must attack the Kennedy proposal to provide such aid as wrong and irresponsible because it would violate our treaty commitments.

This then was the background for the fourth debate. Predictably, the Cuba issue was raised almost at once—and was frequently returned to, both by the panel of questioners and by the candidates. This is what I said:

I think that Senator Kennedy's policies and recommendations for the handling of the Castro regime are probably the most dangerously irresponsible recommendations that he's made during the course of this campaign.

But I could not say why. Instead, I took this tack:

... if we were to follow that recommendation ... we would lose all of our friends in Latin America, we would probably be condemned in the United Nations, and we would not accomplish our objective ... It would be an open invitation for Mr. Khrushchev ... to come into Latin America and to engage us in what would be a civil war and possibly even worse than that.

I concluded by returning to my previous recommendation for a policy of strict quarantine—on every diplomatic and economic front. Kennedy suggested, in turn, that a policy of quarantine would be too little, too late, and in every way short of the need for vigorous action.

When the debate was over, I felt that I had made as good a case as possible for my point of view, but I had no illusion about the effect on the public generally. I was in the ironic position of appearing to be "softer" on Castro than Kennedy—which was exactly the opposite of the truth, if only the whole record could be disclosed.

My attack was effective but with the wrong audience. Doug Dillon called from Washington immediately after we went off the air and said he thought it was my best effort yet and that I had handled the Cuban situation particularly well. He knew the handicaps under which I had had to operate on this issue.

Another touch of irony was that the columnists and editorial writers who leaned to Kennedy, for the one and only time in the campaign, gave me the better of the argument because they thought Kennedy had been off-base with his new "tough" line on Cuba. James Reston said, "The Vice President's criticism of Senator Kennedy's program for assisting the anti-Castro forces to regain power in Cuba was approved by well-informed people here tonight." The *Washington Post* said: "Mr. Nixon accused Mr. Kennedy of recklessness and there is a good deal of point to this observation. Mr. Kennedy has been rather extravagant in his criticisms and rather unsatisfying as to just what to do. Mr. Nixon made a sound point about avoiding unilateral intervention."

But I knew that editorial reaction was one thing and that of people around the country would be something else again. The polls taken after the fourth debate for the most part rated it even or gave me a slight advantage. But I was sure then, and am now, that the position I had to take on Cuba hurt rather than helped me. The average voter is not interested in the technicalities of treaty obligations. He thinks, quite properly, that Castro is a menace, and he favors the candidate who wants to do something about it—something positive and dramatic and forceful—and not the one who takes the "statesmanlike" and the "legalistic" view.

My attack registered in another quarter as well. The vehemence of the editorial criticism, particularly from columnists and papers generally friendly to him, was so great that two days after the debate Kennedy changed his position again. This was his new line: "I have never advocated and I do not advocate intervention in Cuba in violation of our treaty obligations. We must use all available communications, and the moral power of the American Government, to let the forces of freedom in Cuba know that we are on their side." This was, of course, a far cry from his original statement that "the forces fighting for freedom in exile and in the mountains of Cuba should be sustained and assisted."

The *New York Times* noted his new statement with approval: "The use of propaganda and diplomacy is immensely different from force of arms. Mr. Kennedy was . . . well-advised to clarify his position."

I got little comfort, politically, out of his change of position. At least 60 million people had seen and heard him on television demanding a tougher stand against Castro than the Administration and I were advocating publicly. Only a very small percentage of that number

would note Kennedy's change of position, which was reported in the press on the basis of a formal statement and not even a public speech, much less a national television debate. The general "image" to the end of the campaign was to be one of Kennedy stronger and tougher than I against Castro and Communism.

Nevertheless, despite the Cuban episode, I had come out of the fourth debate at least on even terms, in the opinion of most observers.

Looking back now on all four of them, there can be no question but that Kennedy had gained more from the debates than I. While many observers gave me the edge in the last three, he definitely had the advantage in the first—and especially with the television audience. And as I have pointed out, 20 million people saw the first debate who did not bother to tune in the others.

Charles Lucey and Jack Steele of Scripps-Howard probably summarized the total effect of the debates as objectively as anyone: "Nixon started slow and finished fast in the four debates . . . He thus wiped out Mr. Kennedy's advantage in their first contest. But on balance, the four debates also left Mr. Kennedy with a big political plus. He slugged it out on fairly even terms and gained exposure before vast audiences."

Looking to the future, the incumbent—or whoever represents an incumbent Administration—will generally be at a disadvantage in debate because his opponent can attack while he must defend. But joint TV appearances of candidates at the presidential level are here to stay, mainly because people want them and the candidates have a responsibility to inform the public on their views before the widest possible audience.

In future campaigns, however, I would suggest that debates would be more interesting and would serve a more useful purpose if they were limited to specific subjects with only the candidates participating, and if the time allowed for discussion were two hours rather than one so that a subject could be discussed in adequate depth. This was the pattern of the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, to which the 1960 series was often and quite erroneously compared. Every possible effort should be made from the standpoint of makeup, lighting, and other technical factors, to see that the candidates are on even terms. This last objective is easier said than accomplished. As my television adviser, Ted Rogers, commented after the campaign, "It is almost impossible to get a bad picture of Kennedy because of his coloring. On the other hand, it is difficult to get a good picture of Nixon."